

MEMORANDUM

October 21, 1952

TO: Mr. Nelson C. Jackson, Director
Community Services

FROM: Roy E. Norris
Field Representative

SUBJ: Philadelphia Field Visit—October 4-10, 1952.

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Purpose of Visit:

In continuation of a previously conceived strategy and as a result of interest shown by certain NUL Board members during and immediately following board committee meeting on October 2, Newark. Now and Johnson developed with me the following assignment for immediate attention:

- (1) To have a conference with (NUL Board member) Mrs. Radio T. Alexander in Philadelphia—

-to decide on the best procedure for effecting bona-fide legal affidavits from would-be-purchasers of Levitt and Fairlane Village homes in Bucks County, Pennsylvania.

-to seek an understanding with her regarding our activities in Bucks County.

- (2) To locate applicants for purchase and/or rental of Levitt and Fairlane Village Homes.
- (3) To learn the identity of "the two Philadelphia contractors who picked up the Jim Crow Federal housing allocations."
- (4) To discover the finances Fairlane Village.

Background Information:

This visit was an extension of earlier efforts that secured affidavits from Trenton, N.J., and Bucks County residents, attesting to the fact that they had actually attempted to purchase Levitt Homes with no success. (See Memorandum, Trenton-Bucks County Visit, September 26, 1952.)

This was my second UNCSU trip to Philadelphia. The other was made in December, 1951. The Bucks County situation was reviewed from Philadelphia's concern. (See Memorandum, Exploratory Visit to Philadelphia, January 15, 1952.)

Problems Faced:

In addition to 1) the need expressed by Rogers, Moss and Johnson that clarification with Mrs. Alexander be developed, and 2) the need for specific information as to the identity of certain contractors, and how Fairless Village was financed, there was a need to effect some plan to locate applicants for Levitt and Fairless Village Houses.

Because of the size of Philadelphia and because I had not been there since last December, it was obviously unwise to attempt a random search for likely prospects.

Discussions with several informed Philadelphians brought strong statements that Negroes from Philadelphia have tried to apply at Levittown, but not one person could be identified.

Action Taken:

A conference with Mrs. Alexander disclosed her feeling that a legal case might well grow out of the present Levittown racial situation; an appeal might well be made to the courts for a ruling or decision regarding the inherent right of any citizen to be protected from being denied by any seller the opportunity to purchase a commodity for open sale, solely because of his color.* We pointed out that a dim view is being taken of the possibility of a court case at this time. We asked of other approaches, beyond my description of the NUL activities. It was agreed that 1) NUL alone are good, but 2) that more emphasis should be placed on community organizations in Bucks County itself, and 3) that no firm should be drawn up for affidavits - that statements should be in each person's own words regarding the obvious discrimination.

Regarding the location of likely persons from whom affidavits can be secured, I conferred twice with Mr. Wayne Hopkins and his staff at the Amstrong Association. I was interested in advising them of my interest in Philadelphia and in securing help from them in contacting likely persons and leads to likely persons. I pointed out that among the people located, there should be some who are members of certain civic groups and organizations that might, in turn, add their weight to our ultimate goal. Such groups would include labor unions, fraternal groups, veterans organizations, business and/or professional organizations.

*These were not her words. The statement is my attempt to set down her idea.

Because of the challenge, in terms of arousing the Philadelphia Negro community to the importance of the Bucks County situation for the present time and the future, and because the World (baseball) Series was occupying so many men's attention (I was unable to find more than 1 out of 5 men in the office during game time each day), it was agreed that the Armstrong Association would convene a meeting of selected Negro citizens during the week of October 20th. At this meeting I would get my story across and attempt to spark proper action to get at least 50-75 Negroes who are interested in purchasing homes in Bucks County. It was Mr. Hopkins request that the Armstrong Association make arrangements and that I agree to the meeting. This evidence of a wish to cooperate completely was compounded only by the fact that we had already compiled information about 25 prospects and that individual interviews with them would have taken more time than was available.

A conference with Mr. Leffler, Assistant Executive Vice-President, U. S. Steel Corporation, disclosed that the Dunsmuir Corporation (which is building Fairless Village) "is not a subsidiary of U.S. Steel." However, it does buy most of its materials from or through U.S. Steel. Though Mr. Leffler was evasive about the financial relationship between the two firms, I asked specifically if the U.S. Steel Corporation had not made a loan to Dunsmuir. He said that that is true, but that Dunsmuir had paid most of it back. I said I understood that the loan was for \$20 million and wondered if that were the correct figure. Mr. Leffler said he didn't know if it were in that neighborhood or not.

A conference with Mr. Dreyton S. Bryant, Assistant to the Director, Philadelphia Housing Authority, disclosed little knowledge of new developments regarding housing for Negroes among private contractors. However, his memory was jogged as we talked, and the basis was laid for a few leading questions that I put later to the Regional Director of the Federal Housing and Home Finance Agency.

The conference with Mr. Victor Adler, Regional Director, HUD, disclosed that the two contractors who have taken a location for minority group homes are A) Weinberg and Goodman, and B) Federal Construction Company. The first firm is located in the Camden area, the latter in New York City or North Jersey. Weinberg and Goodman has a Philadelphia address, 1423 Spring Garden Street. Mr. Adler said he knows of no other contractors cleared on building for Negroes; wants to find some - asked for my help in that connection - and asked that I return for a conference in his office with himself, his analyst, and Frank Burns (who will come up from Washington) and myself.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Beyond the results described as "Action Taken", immeasurable persons were seen with whom several of the efforts of our general also were undertaken. For instance, with Mr. Charles Ford, Executive Director, District 7, United Steelworkers of America, CIO, a discussion brought forth

his promise to me that he will personally get a lower Bucks County, Bristol (line plant) local to initiate a human relations publicity program and, also, to get Negro union members to apply at Levittown and Fairless Villages. To conserve space and time, I should like to observe that all contacts were cooperative. Moreover, there is every indication that the purposes of the trip were well satisfied, with excellent prospects for continuing action.

It is recommended:

- (1) That I return to Philadelphia for the meeting being arranged by the Armstrong Association during the week of October 29th.
- (2) That I advise Mr. Victor Adler, Regional Director, NWFA, of the date of my return visit, in order to meet with Mr. Adler, the NWFA Analyst and Mr. Funk Burns.
- (3) That our efforts in connection with Bucks County be aided by the organization of a group in Bucks County itself.

-Persons asked to work in this group would include those with whom we have worked and others whom help can be stimulated by seeing a real job going on, etc.

Conferences were held with the following:

Mr. Victor Adler, Regional Director
NWFA, Philadelphia Regional Office
Gimbel Building
9th and Market Streets
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Mrs. Sadie T. N. Alexander
40 South 19th Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Mr. Droyton S. Bryant
Assistant to the Executive Director
Philadelphia Housing Authority
Bridson Building
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Mr. Carter
Industrial Relations Secretary
Armstrong Association
8. Broad Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Mr. Charles Ford, Executive Director
District #7
United Steelworkers of America, CIO
80 South 15th Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Mr. Harry Greene, President
Philadelphia Branch, NAACP
206 North 15th Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Mr. Wayne L. Hopkins, Executive Secretary
Armstrong Association
South Broad Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Mr. Robert G. Jackson, Administrator
Home and Hospital for Aged Colored Persons
1400 Girard Avenue
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Mrs. Hortense Jones, Community Organization Secretary
Armstrong Association
S. Broad Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Mr. James L. Loughlin, Business Agent
Carpenters Union, AFL
80 South 15th Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Mr. C. Melvin Rose
2034 N. Columbia
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Mr. Charles E. Sharkey, Executive Secretary
Philadelphia Branch, NAACP
260 South 15th Street
Philadelphia 2, Pennsylvania

Mr. Jacques Wilmore
American Friends Service Committee
80 South 15th Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Material required and on file:

1. A confidential report on the progress of the integration (housing) program in Philadelphia. (Important.)
2. "Relocation of Families", A report on the relocation operation for the Harris Low-Rent Housing Development, Philadelphia.